

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) Method for handling a guide tube (15) for the upper internals (5) of a nuclear reactor arranged under water in a pit, the said guide tube (15) comprising two independent tubes, an upper one (16) and a lower one (17), in each of which there are fixed horizontal guide plates (24, 25) arranged such that they are spaced apart in the axial direction of the guide tube (15) and comprising a central cavity (24a, 25a) and guide openings (24b, 25b) for guiding a rod cluster control assembly that controls the reactivity in the core of the reactor, in which method a gripper (30) equipped at a first end with two opposed arms (32) that can be moved between a retracted position and a deployed position and, at a second end, with a control member (37) for controlling the said arms (32) is introduced into the central cavity (24a) of the horizontal guide plates (24) of the upper tube (16), ~~characterized in that~~ wherein:

- the first end of the gripper (30) is placed under one of the two upper guide plates (25A, 25B) of the lower tube (17),
- the arms (32) are deployed by means of the control member (37),
- using the said control member (37) the two arms (32) are applied under the said upper guide plate (25A, 25B) of the lower tube (17) on the one hand and the second end of the gripper (30) is applied to the upper end of the upper tube (16) on the other hand, and
- the gripper (30) is used to simultaneously raise the upper (16) and lower (17) tubes of the guide tube (15).

2 (Currently Amended) Method according to Claim 1, characterized in that the gripper (30) is rotated about its longitudinal axis into a given position according to marks formed on the upper end of the upper tube (16) when the first end of the gripper (30) is placed under the second upper guide plate (25B) of the lower tube.

3. (Currently Amended) Device for handling a guide tube (15) for the upper internals (5) of a nuclear reactor arranged under water in a pit, the said guide tube (15) comprising two independent tubes, an upper one (16) and a lower one (17), in each of which there are fixed horizontal guide plates (24, 25) arranged such that they are spaced apart in the axial direction of the guide tube (15) and comprising a central cavity (24a, 25a) and guide openings (24b, 25b) for guiding a rod cluster control assembly that controls the reactivity in the core of the reactor, the said device being formed of a gripper (30) comprising a tubular body (31) equipped at one end with two opposed arms (32) that can be moved between a retracted position and a deployed position and, at a second end, with a control member (37) for controlling the said arms (32), ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the length of the tubular body (31) of the gripper (30) is greater than the distance separating the upper end of the upper tube (16) and the first guide plate (25A) of the lower tube (17) and less than the distance separating the said upper end and the third guide plate (25C) of the said lower tube (17).

4. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the tubular body (31) has, at its second end, a bearing piece (40) for bearing against the upper end of the upper tube (16), the said bearing piece (40) supporting the said control member (37).

5. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 3 ~~or 4~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the said control member (37), first of all, deploys the arms (32) then, secondly, brings these arms (32) closer to the bearing piece (40).

6. (Currently Amended) Device according to ~~any one of Claims 3 to 5~~ Claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the bearing piece (40) comprises, on its face in contact with the upper end of the upper tube (16), at least one elastic washer (41).

7. Device according to ~~any one of Claims 3 to 6~~ Claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the control member (37) comprises a load limiting spring (42) and is connected to the arms (32) by a screw nut system (39).